REPUTATION: Young often seek diversity

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city in other parts of the nation got a public examination.

At issue was government sponsorship of a festival celebrating the area's diverse cultures. Some council members said they welcomed racial and ethnic groups, but they worried gay rights groups would use the festival as a political platform. The Diversity Forum, a private group putting on the event, persuaded council members to vote unanimously in favor of city support, despite the participation of gays.

"You can't be committed to diversity and then exclude one group or another," Bruels told the panel.

The festival discussion touched on debates that have played out in Colorado Springs for years.

The city was the birthplace of Amendment 2, a state constitutional amendment Colorado voters passed in 1992, banning laws protecting gays from discrimination based on their sexual orientation. The U.S. Supreme Court struck down the measure in 1996.

Another high-profile episode started in 2002, when the City Council granted health benefits to same-sex partners of city employees. Several City Council members won election the following year after promising to rescind the benefits. It was their first official action after taking office.

Gays are often singled out in local controversies, but intolerance doesn't end there, Bruels said.

"There's even elements, still, ethnically, where people don't feel totally comfortable here in Colorado Springs," he said.

The perception of an intolerant culture could lead to severe economic consequences, said Carol Coletta, president of CEOs for Cities. The Chicago-based organization studies the economic health of cities. Most young, highly skilled workers put a premium on cultural dynamics such as tolerance as they decide where to live, Coletta said.

"It's not enough to have jobs," Coletta said. "You've got to have a place that people want to be. There's an obvious connection to tolerance as it relates to the ability to pursue the life that you want to live."

Coletta said she knows about Colorado Springs' reputation, mainly because of media coverage of controversies here.

"There has been a string of stories that collectively provide an image of the city that is more of a 'no' city than a 'yes' city," she said.

A lack of young workers could hurt Colorado Springs as companies decide where to set up shop or expand their operations, Coletta said. An intolerant atmosphere could also alienate young people who grow up locally, driving them to take their skills elsewhere, she said.

Workers age 25 to 34 have lost ground in the El Paso County labor force for more than a decade, according to figures compiled by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. Workers age 55 to 64, meanwhile, are increasing their share of the labor force.

No authoritative data show that Colorado Springs is known for being intolerant. Mayor Lionel Rivera has disputed the idea on multiple occasions. He travels widely and discusses the city as a member of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

"I really don't hear what you are telling me you hear out there," he said last week. "To the contrary, I hear very positive things about people wanting to move to Colorado Springs."

David White, vice president of marketing for the Greater Colorado Springs Economic Development Corp., says Colorado Springs' reputation is apparent to him. White's job involves traveling the country, trying to sell companies on the idea of setting up operations in Colorado Springs. The city's reputation is often a barrier, he told the City Council.

"There is a perception that we are not inclusive," White said. "Every place I go, this perception is brought up over and over again. I find myself defending Colorado Springs rather than promoting it."

CONTACT THE WRITER: 636-0187 or perry.swanson@gazette.com

Warming spike bla

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Scientists believe they have solved the mystery of what caused the most rapid global warming in known geologic history, a cataclysmic temperature spike 55 million years ago driven by concentrations of greenhouse gases hundreds of times greater than today.

The culprit, the researchers reported Thursday in the journal Science, was a series of volcanic eruptions that set off a chain reaction releasing massive quantities of carbon into the atmosphere.

The eruptions occurred on the rift between two continental plates as Greenland and Europe separated.

In 10,000 years — a blip in Earth's history — the polar seas turned into tropical baths, deep-sea dwelling microorganisms went extinct and mammals migrated poleward as their habitats warmed. It took about 200,000 years for the atmospheric carbon to be transferred to the deep ocean, allowing the planet to cool.

The event, known as the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum, was discovered in the early 1990s. Since then, scientists have studied it to better understand how Earth will respond to the current buildup of greenhouse gases.

The ancient warming was sparked by the release of 1,500 to 4,000 gigatons of carbon over several thousand years, scientists estimate.

By comparison, emissions from human activities are about 7 gigatons a year — a much faster rate.

During the thermal maximum, "carbon was released over thousands of years," said James Zachos, a professor of earth sciences at the University of California, Santa Cruz,

Oceans face new threats with rising acid levels

THE SEATTLE TIMES

SEATTLE • Carbon dioxide released by fossil fuel combustion has increased acidity levels of the ocean by 30 percent, and in the decades ahead will create new risks for coral, zooplankton and other creatures that help support North Pacific fisheries, according to researchers who gathered at

Sunday, Apr 29, 2007

True or not, city is seen as intolerant

By PERRY SWANSON
THE GAZETTE

A rising number of Colorado Springs leaders are concerned that the city's reputation for intolerance of minorities carries social and economic peril.

The leaders — from government, business, charity and civil rights groups — speak carefully about whether the reputation matches reality. Even if the reputation is wrong, they say, repairing it is essential to attracting young, educated, innovative residents.

Without those residents, the city is at risk of becoming "irrelevant in the global economy," said Glen Bruels, co-chairman of the Colorado Springs Diversity Forum.

Bruels spoke last week at a City Council meeting, where worries over perception of the

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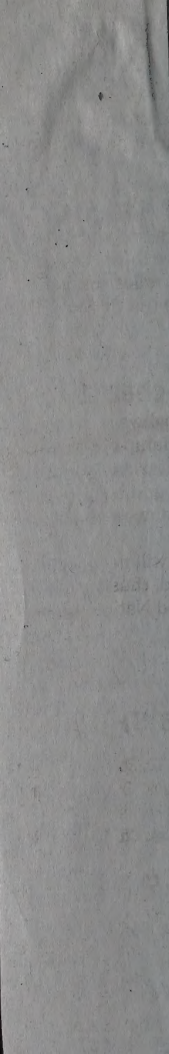
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